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Highlights of Official Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting 1985

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A Division of
American Humane

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Contents

Page

Introduction **1**

Characteristics of Reporting to Child Protective Services **2**
- National Reporting Over Time 2
- Report Totals and Child Reporting Rates by Jurisdiction 5
  - Information Sources 7
  - Duplication 8
- Case Substantiation 8

1985 Case Data Analysis **10**
- Reporting and the National Study Data Base 11
- Source of Report 13
- Summary Profile of Reported Families 14
- Maltreatment 16
- Characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse Cases 17
- Fatalities 20
- Case Substantiation 21

Summary and Conclusions **23**

References **24**

Appendices **25**
- A. Data Items and Response Categories
- B. Case Data Participants
- C. Information Source — Distributional Characteristics

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Patricia Schene
Director
American Association for
Protecting Children
A division of The American
Humane Association

Helen V. Howerton
Director
National Center on Child Abuse
and Neglect
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services

John Fluke
Linda Suski
Alan Potter

Roland Snead

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Introduction

This report represents an updated profile of officially reported child maltreatment in the United States and participating jurisdictions as provided through the National Study on Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting. The National Study is a project conducted since 1974 by the American Association for Protecting Children, a division of The American Humane Association, and funded through the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Since the first national analysis of reporting statistics was issued in 1976, this information has served to keep a diverse audience of administrators, planners and researchers informed on the status of reported child maltreatment. Special analyses of the data at the state and local levels have provided a useful tool to CPS administrators in evaluating their programs and in more informed decision-making for the provision of child protective services. Other special analyses performed in conjunction with the needs of a variety of researchers have enhanced overall knowledge with respect to child abuse and neglect.

The information in this report is derived from official reports of child maltreatment documented by child protective services agencies nationwide during 1985. It focuses on the nature and volume of reporting to CPS agencies, on the characteristics of the reported cases, and on the nature of the response on the part of CPS agencies to reported cases. (Identifying information, such as names or addresses, is not collected.)

As a summary of reporting at the national level, only the general data categories are presented. The data base for the National Study contains considerable detail for each category (See Appendix A), and the information can be made available to interested persons.[1]

In order for data from a state to be included in any of the distributions or cross tabulations presented in this report, each jurisdiction's data must meet systematically applied compatibility criteria. The criteria are applied so that the data included in each analysis will share a common definitional base. For this reason, the number of cases included in each table varies as a function of the number of jurisdictions submitting comparable data. In addition, the particular data elements that constitute the various data categories are presented in Appendix A.[2]

For 1985 the analysis of state supplied case data files is limited to only five states due to funding constraints. In prior years case data has been utilized for 30 or more states, and 30 states provided data files that could not be utilized in 1985. Readers familiar with previous study reports will note that the consequence of utilizing a more limited set of data is that information on certain categories of data that had been available to the study in previous years is now unavailable. The other consequence is that comparisons to data from previous years is not appropriate. Missing case data categories include:

1) Child relationships to both caretakers and perpetrators
2) Case status
3) Services
4) Type of report
5) Stress factors
6) Caretaker composition, age, sex, race and employment
7) Public assistance status

---

[1] Inquiries about the availability of data should be directed to the American Association for Protecting Children in Denver, Colorado, or to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in Washington, D.C.

[2] Detailed information on the methodology of the National Study may be obtained in the publication **Trends in Child Abuse and Neglect: A National Perspective** (AHA, 1984).

Characteristics of Reporting to Child Protective Services

National Reporting Over Time

Although not all states and jurisdictions contribute case level data to the National Study data base, all states have been surveyed in order to obtain data on report totals, sources of the totals, and selected characteristics of the reporting systems. This survey information provides the basis for the estimates of reporting levels and rates contained in this section.

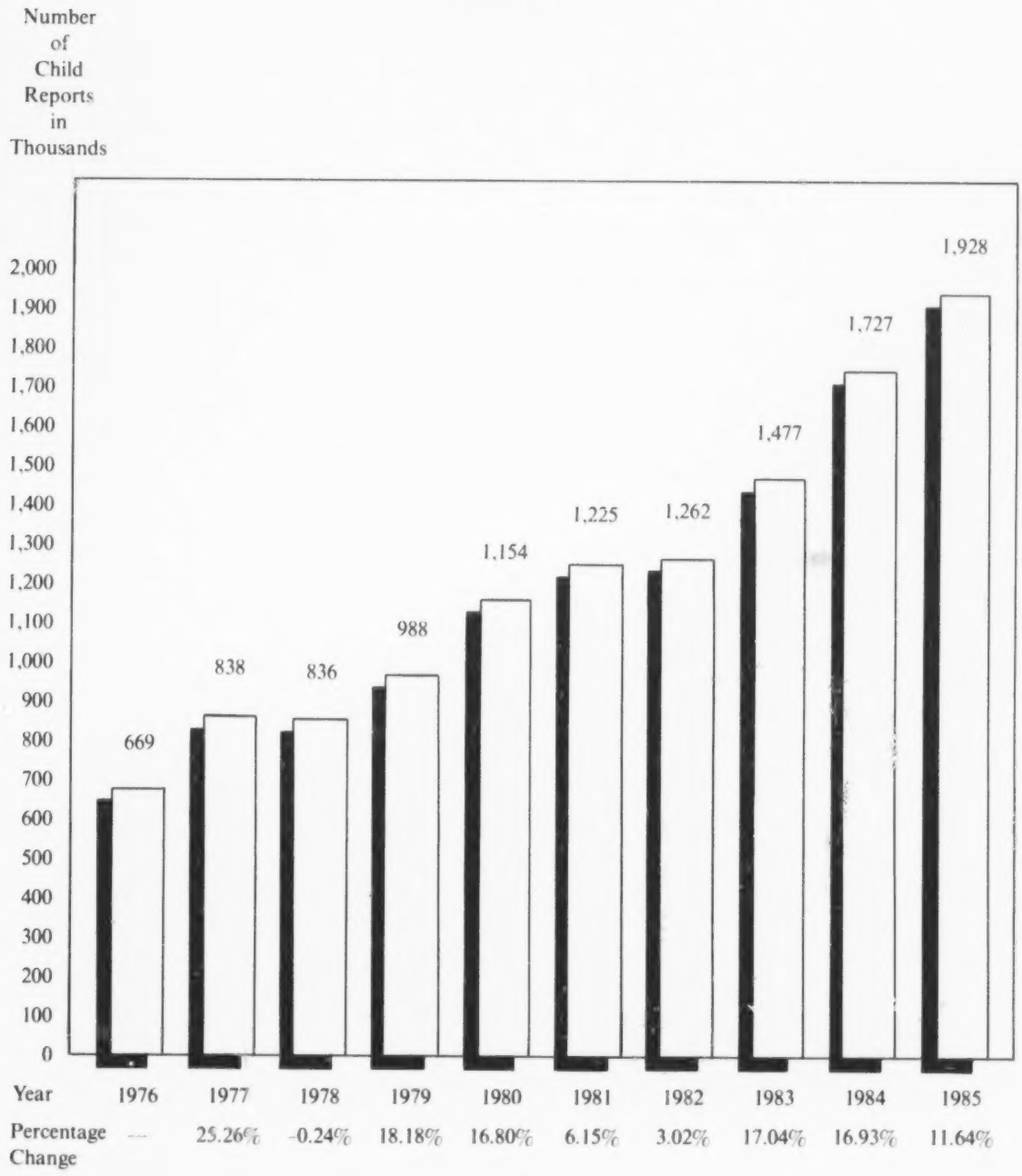
In 1985, an estimated 1,928,000 children were reported for child abuse and neglect to child protective services agencies in the United States and participating jurisdictions. The rate of reporting is estimated at 30.6 children per 1,000 U.S. child population in 1985. Similarly, an estimated 1,146,000 families were reported in 1985. The total number of families is a general indicator of the level of activity on the part of CPS, each roughly corresponding to the number of investigations performed.

Another important consideration is that with the exception of four states, these totals include duplicate reports. That is to say, a particular child and/or family may be reported more than once in a given year and the totals presented here reflect that duplication.

Of particular concern to policy makers in the child protective services system is not only the absolute levels of reporting but also the extent to which reporting has increased over time. Information on child report level and rate changes respectively are provided in Figures 1 and 2.

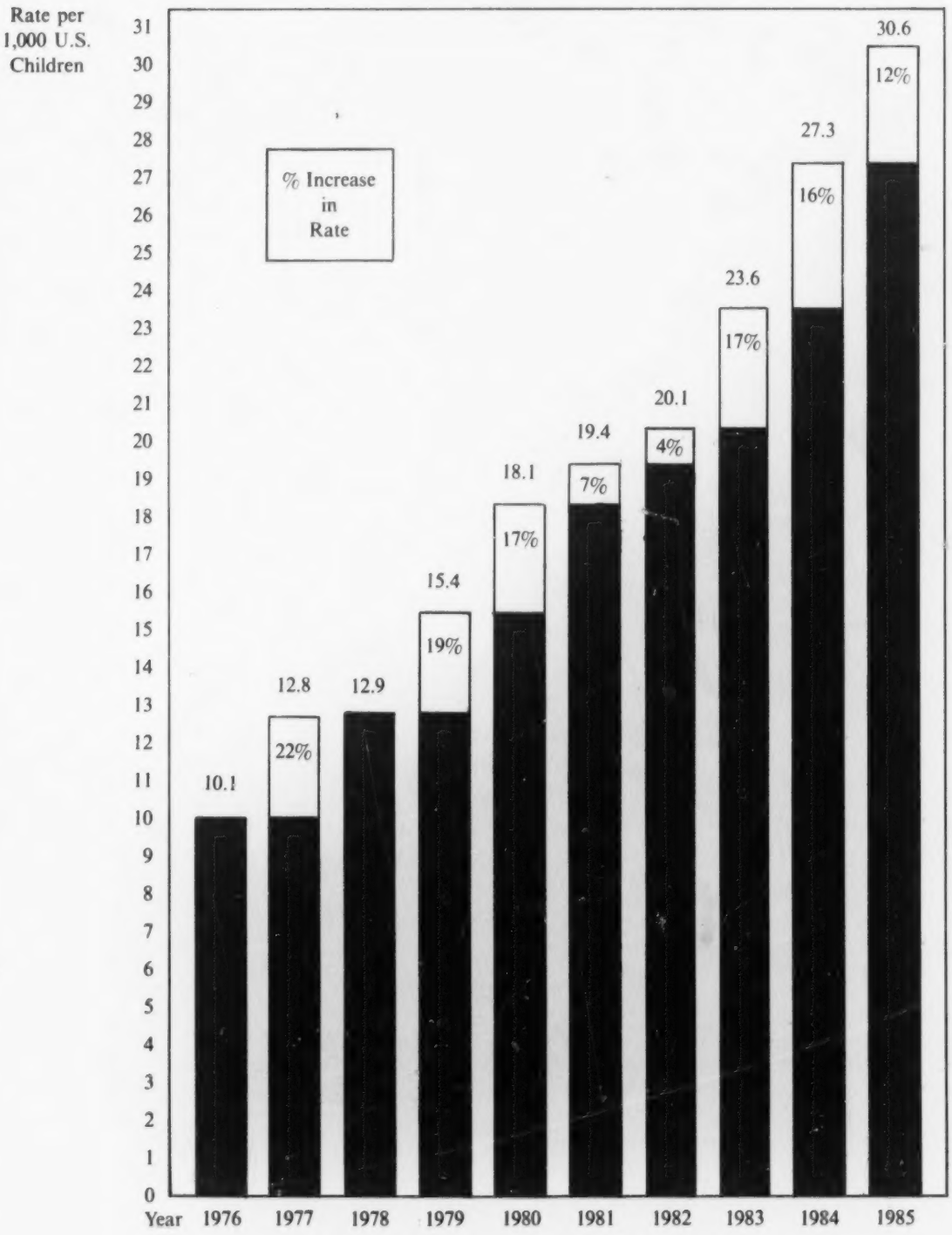
Overall child reporting levels have increased 188 percent between 1976 and 1985, the only years for which this information is available. Although report levels have increased overall, the rate of increase declined between 1976 and 1982, as indicated in Figure 1. In 1983 and again in 1984 reporting increased by approximately 16 to 17 percent in each year. In 1985 reporting increased by 12 percent. As might be expected, changes in child reporting rates (defined as the number of children reported per 1000 children in the U.S.) as shown in Figure 2 also follow a similar pattern over time. The figures for percentage change from year to year for Figures 1 and 2 are not equal since in Figure 1 only the change in the level of reports is portrayed, while Figure 2 reflects changes both in the levels of reports and in the U.S. child population.

Figure 1
National Estimates of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports
1976-1985



Child totals include the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and Marianas

Figure 2
Child Reporting Rates Over Time



Child totals from each of 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia

Report Totals and Child Reporting Rates by Jurisdiction

Table 1 shows 1985 family totals and numbers of involved children within each of the jurisdictions or as estimated. An "involved child" is a child identified as the subject of the report. The involved child reporting rates for 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 are based on provisional child population estimates for each year from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986, P-25, 998).

There is considerable variation in involved child reporting rates among the jurisdictions, from a low of 7.3 to a high of 57.2 children per 1,000 child population in 1985.

In general, these rates represent total reporting for each state; however, reports from special jurisdictions within some states, such as Native American reservations, may not be included. Among the reasons for the variation is that child protective services reporting systems vary both with respect to policy and practice. The level of public awareness and proactive efforts on the part of a community and the media related to identifying children at risk of maltreatment also affects reporting rates.

It is not possible to draw a connection between reporting rates and actual incidence of maltreatment. By definition, maltreatment that is not reported is not accounted for in reporting statistics. Thus, it would be inappropriate to surmise from these statistics that Maine, at 31.0 children reported per thousand children, has more child maltreatment than Illinois with 22.5 children reported per thousand children. It is possible to conclude that proportionately more children in Maine were identified through their particular reporting system.

Table 1
1985 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Totals and Rates For All States and Four Territories

	Number of Families Reported	Number of Children Reported	Child Report Rates: Involved Children Per 1000 U.S. Children			
			1985	1984	1983	1982
National	1,146,022	1,928,535	30.6	27.3	23.6	20.1
State						
Alabama	19,459[A, 6]	31,385[A, 3]	28.10	25.59	21.04	21.24
Alaska	4,982[B, 6]	8,036[B, 2]	47.27	43.53	32.45	22.55
Arizona	24,683[A, 2]	39,740[A, 6]	45.42	23.12	N/A	N/A
Arkansas	12,592[A, 2]	20,081[A, 2]	31.09	32.17	25.89	23.34
California	159,060[A, 3]	295,769[A, 3]	43.24	37.57	35.24	33.71
Colorado	8,640[A, 8]	13,410[A, 8]	15.52	15.67	N/A	N/A
Connecticut	11,118[A, 2]	16,804[A, 2]	22.23	22.78	18.55	15.51
Delaware	3,798[A, 2]	6,115[A, 6]	38.95	50.88	52.66	N/A
District of Columbia	3,416[A, 3]	5,990[A, 3]	45.38	28.94	49.27	39.74
Florida	75,328[A, 3]	140,110[A, 1]	55.25	34.88	39.33	33.25
Georgia	26,511[B, 3]	42,683[B, 6]	25.74	22.20	21.70	18.61
Hawaii	2,928[A, 2]	4,069[A, 2]	14.03	13.84	11.21	10.78
Idaho	7,880[B, 4]	12,687[B, 6]	39.16	35.30	N/A	20.00
Illinois	41,463[A, 2]	69,627[A, 2]	22.47	21.70	20.55	19.58
Indiana	20,998[A, 6]	33,868[A, 2]	22.49	19.15	18.20	15.53
Iowa	15,989[A, 2]	25,534[A, 2]	33.03	31.95	29.52	28.14
Kansas	14,375[A, 3]	23,595[A, 3]	35.48	35.01	32.70	29.65
Kentucky	20,221[A, 7]	35,093[A, 2]	34.30	31.76	31.50	29.23
Louisiana	28,528[A, 4]	48,498[A, 1]	35.79	25.65	24.61	28.10
Maine	5,847[A, 2]	9,414[A, 6]	30.97	44.20	38.54	28.06
Maryland	11,805[A, 6]	19,041[A, 9]	17.36	7.44	13.30	N/A
Massachusetts	30,167[A, 1]	47,060[A, 2]	34.50	33.99	26.31	20.40
Michigan	42,982[A, 2]	95,114[A, 2]	38.31	36.45	34.33	32.10
Minnesota	15,703[A, 1]	22,046[A, 1]	19.36	21.08	14.36	12.63
Mississippi	8,042[A, 2]	12,948[A, 6]	16.41	8.74	N/A	N/A
Missouri	41,147[A, 2]	75,955[A, 2]	57.24	55.13	49.08	42.26
Montana	6,362[A, 2]	10,243[A, 6]	43.77	21.72	18.56	18.80
Nebraska	7,952[A, 2]	12,803[A, 6]	28.58	18.58	12.29	13.32
Nevada	6,618[A, 2]	12,303[A, 7]	55.92	37.59	32.01	36.07
New Hampshire	3,765[A, 3]	6,062[A, 6]	23.96	26.62	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	29,218[A, 6]	47,126[A, 2]	25.31	23.94	14.12	10.06
New Mexico	7,080[A, 6]	11,419[A, 1]	25.49	32.18	N/A	N/A
New York	84,119[A, 2]	139,032[A, 2]	31.83	30.69	21.72	N/A
North Carolina	18,456[A, 2]	27,625[A, 2]	17.39	16.38	17.00	16.84
North Dakota	3,083[A, 4]	4,719[A, 4]	23.95	22.38	19.32	19.37
Ohio	40,898[A, 6]	65,965[A, 3]	22.96	32.87	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	12,571[A, 6]	20,275[A, 2]	21.94	19.71	16.50	16.66
Oregon	18,423[A, 2]	29,661[A, 6]	41.72	23.33	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	13,008[A, 6]	20,980[A, 2]	7.29	6.90	5.39	5.22
Rhode Island	6,468[A, 2]	10,413[A, 6]	46.28	37.57	N/A	N/A

Table 1
1985 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Totals and Rates
For All States and Four Territories
(continued)

	Number of Families Reported	Number of Children Reported	Child Report Rates: Involved Children Per 1000 U.S. Children 1985	1984	1983	1982
South Carolina	17,544[A, 3]	22,330[A, 7]	24.22	25.84	16.75	25.45
South Dakota	5,852[A, 6]	9,439[A, 2]	45.82	49.25	27.34	25.24
Tennessee	29,171[B, 6]	47,050[B, 2]	38.22	32.98	29.70	25.83
Texas	66,911[A, 2]	108,561[A, 2]	22.63	22.45	21.35	20.21
Utah	10,450[A, 2]	16,903[A, 7]	27.53	23.95	N/A	N/A
Vermont	2,572[A, 2]	3,773[A, 7]	26.95	22.13	18.91	N/A
Virginia	30,853[A, 6]	49,763[A, 2]	34.46	30.00	30.09	28.23
Washington	28,804[A, 2]	40,000[A, 2]	33.90	36.51	31.98	36.43
West Virginia	11,183[A, 8]	17,357[A, 8]	33.64	32.69	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	18,931[A, 7]	24,411[A, 4]	19.01	13.47	7.46	6.90
Wyoming	1,525[A, 2]	2,319[A, 2]	14.49	21.89	20.30	16.30
Guam	622[A, 3]	871[A, 1]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Puerto Rico	5,526[A, 8]	11,831[A, 8]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virgin Islands	305[A, 1]	491[A, 6]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marianas Islands	90[A, 8]	140[A, 8]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table Footnotes: The first footnote, or duplication code, indicates whether the report is duplicated, while the second footnote, or source code, represents the information source for the number of reports. For example, under the column "Number of Families Reported," Alabama is reported as 19,459[A, 6] which corresponds to duplication code A and source code 6.

Duplication Codes:
[A]Duplicated reports.
[B]Unduplicated reports.

Source Codes:
[1]Estimate provided by state.
[2]Number provided by state computer system.
[3]Number based on a hand count of reports at the state level.
[4]Number based on counts of reports made by local jurisdictions, e.g. counties.
[6]Estimate computed based on a nationally derived ratio of children to families or families to children. In 1985, the conversion factor from families to children is 1.61 and from children to families 0.62.
[7]Estimate computed based on the ratio of children to families or families to children from case reports available to the national study for this state.
[8]Estimate is based on last year's data as no data are available for 1985.
[9]Two different social serices programs contribute to this total.

Information Sources

In general, states are able to provide estimates or counts of the number of families or children which were reported in 1985 (see Appendix D). Among all U.S. states and territories, 66 percent are able to provide official information on the number of families reported (source codes 1 to 4) and 64 percent are able to provide this information for children. For all states it is possible to estimate either children or families given the information provided by that state or in combination with data provided by other states.

Duplication

A duplicated report exists when a family or child previously reported is enumerated again as part of the total reports during the calendar year. Potentially, a family or child can be re-reported at any time either during or after an investigation, also a family can be re-reported regardless of whether it is currently being served by CPS. Only four out of 55 states do not provide duplicated report totals.

Case Substantiation

Based on data from 26 states, a national estimate of 732,000 reported children were substantiated for child abuse and neglect by CPS systems in 1985.[1] This represents approximately 40 to 43 percent of the children who were reported in those 26 states in 1985. The number of cases substantiated does not reflect the number of cases that were opened for protective services, and in past years the percentage of cases opened for protective services has been in the vicinity of 45 to 50 percent (American Association for Protecting Children, 1986, p. 31).

Table 2 displays the number of children associated with substantiated cases. The data from the 26 states that appear in this table were derived from survey statistics.

[1]This estimate is based on survey results rather than case data.

Table 2
1985 Child Abuse and Neglect Substantiation Totals

State	Number of Children Associated with Substantiated Reports		Percent of All Children Reported Associated with Substantiated Reports
			%
Arkansas	7,025[A, 2]		35.0
Connecticut	11,723[A, 2]		69.8
Florida	56,293[A, 1]		40.2
Illinois	32,545[A, 2]		46.7
Indiana	9,963[A, 2]		29.4
Iowa	6,361[A, 2]		24.9
Kansas	6,564[B, 3]		27.8
Kentucky	15,458[A, 2]		44.1
Louisiana	19,399[A, 1]		40.0
Massachusetts	18,056[A, 2]		38.4
Missouri	32,167[A, 2]		42.4
Nebraska	7,772[A, 2]		60.7
Nevada	4,547[A, 2]		37.0
New Hampshire	2,472[A, 3]		40.8
New Jersey	18,038[A, 2]		38.3
New Mexico	4,122[A, 3]		36.1
North Carolina	10,554[A, 2]		38.2
Oklahoma	7,194[A, 2]		35.5
Oregon	12,765[A, 2]		43.0
Pennsylvania	7,724[A, 2]		36.8
South Dakota	3,957[A, 2]		41.9
Texas	59,863[A, 2]		55.1
Utah	5,569[A, 2]		33.0
Virginia	12,213[A, 2]		24.5
Wisconsin	7,402[A, 4]		30.3
Guam	423[B, 1]		48.5
Total	**380,169**	**Average**	**40.0**
		Weighted Average	**42.8**[1]

[1]The weighted average used here is defined as the number of substantiated children times the percentage substantiated summed over all included states and then divided by the total number of children substantiated (380,169). One interpretation of this statistic is that if policy for substantiation were consistent for all the states included in this distribution, it is likely that forty-three percent of all reported children would be associated with substantiated cases.

A precise definition of case substantiation cannot be offered because the definition and policy varies from state to state. Nevertheless, all definitions imply a degree of certainty that the involved child is in fact at risk, and in many states that some level of intervention is warranted in the child's behalf.

It cannot be assumed that the lack of substantiating evidence means that no maltreatment has occurred, nor unequivocally that the child is not at risk. However, this does not diminish the legal and moral mandate for protective services or the professional caseworker responsibility that everything possible be done to determine where and how child protective services can be most effective. On the other hand, reported cases which yield mere perceptions of risk without any apparent validity are a tremendous drain on the investigative resources of child protective services.

1985 Case Data Analysis:

States of:
Florida
Illinois
New York
Texas
Utah

Reporting and The National Study Data Base

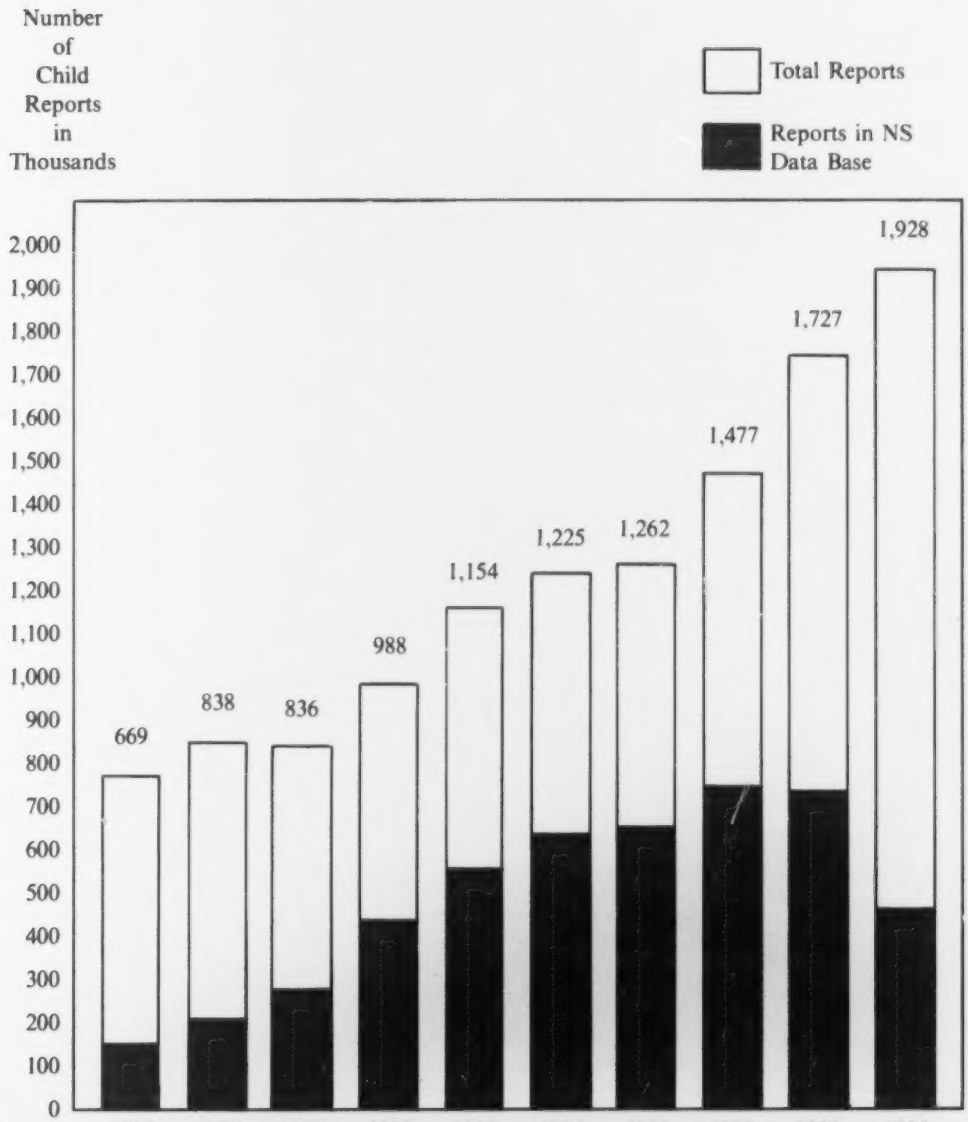
In 1985, five states representing 24 percent of the total U.S. child population were selected for inclusion in the National Study database with case data in the form of computer generated files. States utilized in the 1985 report are Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas and Utah. A listing of these case data participants and the number of reports from each is provided in Appendix C. The remainder of this report is based on the analysis of data from this database.

Figure 3, displays the relationship between the number of children reported for each year since 1976 and the proportion of those children for whom case data are available in the National Study data base. As can be seen up until 1985, roughly 40 to 50 percent of the children reported and 30 to 39 states have been a part of the data file since 1979.

Of some interest in considering the National Study data base is the extent to which the data it portrays are representative of the reporting phenomenon throughout the country. It does not necessarily follow that the specific characteristics of children, families and CPS response described in the remainder of this report are representative of national experience. The distributions discussed in the following sections are based on data from five states and of these only those of the five with definitionally compatible data. Further, some of the variables discussed are probably much more sensitive to local differences in policy and practice than are others. An examination of reporting rates from states which were included compared to those which were not indicates that the distributions are similar (see Appendix D).

In examining the following tables it is useful to consider that units of analysis may be children, cases, and perpetrators. These factors contribute to the variation in the underlying number of "cases" or N's associated with each figure or table.

Figure 3
Child Reporting Over Time



Year	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
States In NS	30	32	32	33	39	37	36	36	30	5
Rate per 1,000	10.1	12.8	12.9	15.4	18.1	19.4	20.1	23.6	27.3	30.6

Child totals from each of 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and Marianas

Source of Report

As Table 3 shows, the types of individuals who report suspected maltreatment to child protective services agencies are more often professional sources rather than non-professionals. It is the victim's own friends, neighbors and relatives who constitute the single largest group of reporters.

Table 3
Source of Report
(N = 117,176 Reports)[1]

Source	Percent of All Reports	
Professionals:		
Medical Personnel	11.4%	
School Personnel	14.9%	
Law Enforcement	12.3%	
Social Services	13.1%	
Child Care Providers	2.2%	
Total Professionals:		**53.9%**
Nonprofessionals:		
Friends, Neighbors, Relatives, Self[2]	34.3%	
Anonymous	7.4%	
Other Sources[3]	4.4%	
Total Nonprofessionals:		**46.1%**
Total All Sources	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

[1] Data for this table is from the states of Illinois, Texas and Utah.
[2] "Self" includes both victim and perpetrators and accounts for about two percent of all reports.
[3] "Other Sources" include, landlords, religious personnel, and other individuals not readily categorized by the standard categories.

Summary Profile of Reported Families

Table 4 provides an overview of the major demographic characteristics of families who are reported to child protective services agencies.

Table 4
Summary Profile of Families Reported for Child Maltreatment

Descriptors	1985	States Included 1985
Involved Child Descriptors		
Age		Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas,
(N = 366,203 Children)		Utah
Average Age	7.1 years	
Sex		Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas,
(N = 367,995 Children)		Utah
Males	48.1%	
Females	51.9%	
Race		Illinois, New York, Texas, Utah
(N = 247,755 Children)		
White	51.9%	
Black	26.8%	(15.24 percent of all children were
Hispanic	19.0%	black in 1985, U.S. Bureau of the
Other	2.2%	Census, 1986, P-25, 985)
Family Descriptors		
Children In Household		New York, Texas, Utah
(N = 271,748 Reports)		
Average Number of Children in Household	2.27	
Perpetrator Descriptors		
Age		Illinois, New York, Texas
(N = 177,238 Perpetrators)		
Average Age	31.5 years	
Sex		Illinois, New York, Texas
(N = 197,465 Perpetrators)		
Males	40.6%	
Females	59.4%	
Race		Illinois, New York, Texas
(N = 194,896 Perpetrators)		
White	56.4%	
Black	24.3%	
Hispanic	17.8%	
Other	1.5%	

Differences between the characteristics of children and families reported for child abuse and neglect and the U.S. population follow the patterns of prior years, however, as combined the five states in the 1985 data tend to have a smaller percentage of whites (52 percent vs. 67 percent) than has been true of reporting data of earlier years. The race distribution of the children involved differs from that for all U.S. children in that 52 percent of the involved children are white, compared to an estimated 81 percent of all U.S. children in 1984. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986, P-25, 985).[4] Age also differs such that the average age of involved children is 7.1 years versus 8.5 for all U.S. children. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986, P-25, 985). The over-representation of young children can also be seen in Table 5 below.

[4]The actual percentages for the various race categories cannot be compared because the census data do not reflect a distinction between Hispanic and black and white, whereas the data received by the National Study do.

Table 5
Comparison of Age Distributions

Age	All U.S. Children[1]	Child Abuse and Neglect Involved Children[2]
0- 5	34%	43%
6-11	31%	33%
12-17	35%	24%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

[1]Source is the U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Estimates of the Population of the United States by Age, Sex and Race: 1980 to 1985," Series P-25, 985; 1986.
[2]Source is the National Study on Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting data base. States of Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Utah.

The over-representation of younger and minority children has been a common characteristic of reporting data since at least 1976. Among possible reasons for this are investigative priorities, perceptions of risk by reporting sources, as well as conditions associated with poverty and unemployment. (cf. Pelton, 1981, Hampton and Newberger, 1985, McPherson and Garcia, 1983).

The increase in the percentage of minorities for 1985 in the reporting statistics can probably be attributed to the use of data from a more limited number of states.

Maltreatment

Table 6 shows the distribution of involved children for whom maltreatment information was available across categories of maltreatment. Maltreatment is defined as the indication of a specific type of abuse or neglect during or after a CPS investigation. In other words, an indication of maltreatment is made as part of the investigative process, and reflects information about children obtained by a caseworker by that process. Note that because a child could have experienced more than one maltreatment type, the total is greater than 100 percent.

Table 6
Type of Maltreatment

Type of Maltreatment	Percent of Children 1985 (N = 225,360)[1]
Major Physical Injury	2.2%
Minor Physical Injury	15.4%
Unspecified Physical Injury	4.1%
Sexual Maltreatment	11.7%
Deprivation of Necessities	55.7%
Emotional Maltreatment	8.9%
Other Maltreatment	10.2%

[1]The distribution for 1985 is based on four states constituting 24 percent of the U.S. Child Population, Florida, Illinois, New York and Texas. The specific categories used in the more general categories presented here are presented in Appendix A.

There is no apparent change between 1985 and 1984 data in that the percentage of maltreatment in each of the general categories are relatively stable.

Characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse Cases

Sexual abuse continues to be an increasing problem and an important component of child protective services practice. The 1985 data shows a slowing of the pattern of increase as communities have identified and begun to deal with sexual abuse as an integral part of child protection practice.

In 1985 an estimated 113,000 children were reported with sexual maltreatments, a 13% increase over the 1984 estimate. This represents an estimated rate of 17.9 sexually abused children per 10,000 U.S. child population.

The 1985 increase in sexual abuse cases suggest a slowing of the rate of increase from prior years. Table 7 presents sexual abuse estimates for the years 1976 through 1985. During the period from 1981 to 1985 the pattern of increase in numbers and rates fluctuated downward starting at about 63 percent from 1981 to 1982 then decreasing to roughly 33 percent per year for the years 1982 to 1984 and is at 13 percent for 1985.

Table 7
National Estimate of Rates and Numbers of Children Indicated Upon Investigation to be Sexually Maltreated

Year	Estimated No. of Children in Thousands	Rate Per 10,000 Children	Percent of U.S. Child Population From Which Rate Was Derived
1976	6	0.86	33%
1977	11	1.74	36%
1978	12	1.87	43%
1979	27	4.23	42%
1980	37	5.76	43%
1981	35	5.55	47%
1982	57	9.01	40%
1983	74	11.86	46%
1984	100	15.88	41%
1985	113	17.87[1]	24%

[1]The estimate is based on maltreatment reports from the five states in the 1985 data base. When compared against survey data from all states, this estimate was found to be slightly conservative but the most consistent with prior year estimates. The 95 percent confidence interval associated with this statistic is 6.68 to 29.06 per 10,000 children.

A measure of the relative importance of sexual abuse cases to Child Protective Services activity is found in the distribution of types of maltreatment. Previous findings from the National Study showed the proportion of sexual abuse cases increased from 3.2 percent in 1976 to 13.3 percent in 1984 (Suski, 1986).

The 1985 data suggests that sexual abuse is no longer increasing as a percentage of all reported abuse and neglect. Based on the data from five states, sexual abuse accounted for 11.7 percent of maltreated children in 1985. This represents only a slight increase over the 11.2 percent of maltreated children found in the same five states in 1984.

The data which follows is based on the selection of children reported for sexual maltreatment from the 1985 data base of five states: Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Utah. Sexual maltreatment is defined as a maltreatment indicated during or at the conclusion of an investigation.

The limitations of this data base, as indicated previously, apply to this analysis as well. In addition, the participating states contributed variable proportions of their cases to the sexual abuse analysis, from two percent to 16 percent, based on state variations in definitions and procedures related to maltreatment. The effect of this on the sexual abuse data base is that one state, Texas, contributed almost one-half of the data. Therefore, it is important to recognize the limitations of the findings reported in this analysis in terms of generalizeability and comparability to prior year findings.

The profile for sexual maltreatment, as presented in Table 8, differs considerably from that for all maltreated children. Sexually maltreated children are two years older, on average, than children with other types of maltreatment. Among sexually abused children, 35 percent are in the 12-17 age range, whereas only 23 percent of all abused children are in that age group. Sexually abused children are also more likely to be female and white than are all maltreated children.

These findings are generally consistent with previous analyses of sexual abuse cases (Suski, 1986) with the following two exceptions. The high proportion of Hispanic children in both the sexual abuse and all maltreatment groups can be attributed to the influence of specific states contributing to the 1985 data. Although males tend to make up a small proportion of sexual abuse cases, in the past they have been an increasing component of sexual abuse case loads. The 1985 data show a lower proportion of males and may also indicate a state specific influence.

Perpetrator characteristics indicate that generally only one perpetrator is involved in sexual abuse and that this person tends to be male. On average the perpetrator of sexual abuse tends to be two years older than other perpetrators and is more likely to be white. The age and race characteristics of perpetrators tend to be consistent with the age/race differences of the children.

Sexual abuse is reported more frequently by professional (60 percent) than nonprofessional sources (40 percent), whereas professional sources of report exceed nonprofessional sources by only 54 percent to 46 percent when all reports are included. Of the professional reporting sources of sexual abuse, the highest proportion come from social services, then law enforcement, medical and school personnel.

Sexual abuse tends to occur in isolation, 89% of the cases were reported only for sexual abuse. Of associated maltreatments, the most common is neglect, which is indicated for 6% of the sexually abused children in this study. One explanation of this finding is that the reporter perceives an inaction by a caretaker who may have been able to prevent the abuse.

Table 8
Sexual Abuse Compared to All Maltreatment — 1985

Characteristics	Sexual Abuse	All Maltreatment
Child Characteristics		
Age	(N = 27,348)	(N = 366,203)
Average age in years	9.0	7.1
0- 5 Years	28.5%	43.6%
6-11	36.2%	33.1%
12-17	35.3%	23.3%
Sex	(N = 27,523)	N = 367,995)
Male	19.0%	48.1%
Female	81.0%	51.9%
Race	(N = 21,107)	(N = 247,755)
White	63.8%	51.9%
Black	16.3%	26.8%
Hispanic	18.3%	19.0%
Other	1.5%	2.2%
Perpetrator Characteristics		
Number of Perpetrators Reported	(N = 16,535)	(N = 151,483)
Only one	77.0%	71.0%
Two or more	23.3%	29.0%
Age of Perpetrator	(N = 19,703)	(N = 177,238)
Average age in years	33.1	31.5
Sex of Perpetrator	(N = 20,841)	(N = 197,465)
Male	76.7%	40.6%
Female	23.3%	59.4%
Race of Perpetrator	(N = 20,703)	(N = 194,896)
White	63.1%	56.4%
Black	17.6%	24.2%
Hispanic	18.3%	17.8%
Other	1.0%	1.5%
Reporting and Response Characteristics		
Source of Report	(N = 15,479)	(N = 117,176)
Professionals — Total	**60.4%**	**53.9%**
Medical Personnel	14.1%	11.4%
School Personnel	13.3%	14.9%
Social Services	16.8%	12.3%
Law Enforcement	14.4%	13.1%
Child Care	1.9%	2.2%
Nonprofessionals — Total	**39.6%**	**46.1%**

Fatalities

Data on fatalities reported to CPS are available from Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas and Utah. The actual number of children who died in 1985 as a result of maltreatment is not available through this study. Further, the data on child fatalities from the five states included here may not reflect all fatalities in these states that are associated with abuse or neglect. The characteristics of the 253 fatality cases available in the data are described and compared to all cases in this section.

Children who are reported as fatalities are much younger compared to all involved children — their average age is 2.0 versus 7.1 years. Males are over-represented by comparison with all involved children, 58 percent of fatalities versus 48 percent of all reported children. The most frequently associated type of maltreatment is deprivation of necessities which is indicated for 46 percent of the fatalities, followed by major physical injuries (35 percent) and minor physical injury (20 percent).

The single largest group of reporting sources for fatalities is medical personnel (41 percent), followed by law enforcement (37 percent). In total, professional sources account for 89 percent of fatality reports compared to 54 percent of all child abuse and neglect reports.

Case Substantiation

Are there any systematic differences that can be observed between substantiated and unsubstantiated cases? The data presented here is limited to the reports from five states: Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas, and Utah. While the number of reports in this sample approaches 300,000, the reader is reminded to keep in mind that the data may not replicate against a broader nationwide sample.

The age distributions in Table 9 show that the involved children in substantiated cases tend to be somewhat older; 25.7 percent are in the 12 and over age group compared to 22.6 percent of involved children in unsubstantiated cases. Possible reasons for this difference may include the fact that case substantiation is more difficult with very young children, or it may be related to the type of maltreatment more generally experienced with older children such as sexual abuse.

Table 9
Demographic Characteristics of Involved Children

	Substantiated Cases	Unsubstantiated Cases
Child Characteristics		
Age	(N = 190,073 : 52.9%[1])	(N = 169,215 : 47.1%)
Average age in years	7.3	7.0
0- 5	78,622 : 51.0%	75,489 : 49.0%
6-11	62,545 : 53.0%	55,530 : 47.0%
12-17	48,906 : 56.2%	38,196 : 43.8%
Sex	(N = 187,571 : 52.5%)	(N = 169,986 : 47.5%)
Male	88,787 : 51.6%	83,228 : 48.4%
Female	98,784 : 53.2%	86,758 : 46.8%
Race	(N = 120,418 : 49.8%)	(N = 121,487 : 50.2%)
White	63,596 : 50.9%	61,348 : 49.1%
Black	31,727 : 48.3%	34,011 : 51.7%
Hispanic	22,388 : 49.1%	23,243 : 50.9%
Other	2,707 : 48.4%	2,885 : 51.6%

[1] Percentages in this table are by row, and compare the percent substantiated to unsubstantiated cases. Differences in the overall percentages from major category to major category are due to differences in the states that make up the major categories and may also reflect missing data. See Table 4, page 14 for the states that are included in the major child demographic categories.

There is also a slight bias toward female victims in substantiated cases. 52.7 percent females for substantiated cases compared to 51.0 percent for unsubstantiated cases. Again, the explanation probably has to do with a relationship between substantiation and the relatively large percentage of females associated with sexual maltreatment.

The ethnic background of involved children for substantiated and unsubstantiated cases is also reported in Table 9. Generally, there appears to be a slight bias in ethnicity as a function of substantiation based on these data. In particular for these states even though there are more unsubstantiated cases associated with these children, slightly more than 50 percent of white children are substantiated, whereas less than 50 percent of the minority children are substantiated.

Table 10 provides the number and percentage of abuse/neglect reports by substantiation status and source of report. All professional sources except child care providers have higher substantiation rates than nonprofessional sources (i.e. friends, neighbors, relatives, anonymous, and other). Combining the professional sources together, we observe that 63 percent of all substantiated cases are reported by professionals; in contrast, only 43 percent of the unsubstantiated cases are reported by professionals.

Table 10
Source of Report

	Substantiated Cases (N = 61,717 : 54.1%[1])	Unsubstantiated Cases (N = 52,416 : 45.9%)
Medical	8,094 : 61.8%	5,001 : 38.2%
School	10,987 : 64.2%	6,122 : 35.8%
Social Services	7,791 : 56.3%	6,050 : 43.7%
Law Enforcement	10,692 : 71.5%	4,253 : 28.5%
Non-Professional	17,847 : 46.3%	20,710 : 53.7%
Child Care	1,348 : 52.7%	1,208 : 47.3%
Other	4,958 : 35.3%	9,072 : 64.7%

[1] Percentages in this table are by row, and compare the percent substantiated to unsubstantiated cases. See Table 3, page 13 for the states that are included in this distribution.

Even within the professional groupings, there exist major differences in substantiation rates. Law enforcement professionals reported 71 percent substantiated cases and 29 percent unsubstantiated cases; substantiated and unsubstantiated cases reported by social service professionals were 56 percent and 44 percent respectively.

Summary and Conclusions

There were 1,928,000 children reported nationwide in 1985. This represents an increase of 12 percent since 1984 and an increase of 188 percent in the nine years since 1976.

This volume of children reported for child abuse and neglect represents a monumental effort on the part of communities to identify children needing protecting as well as an enormous demand on CPS systems nationwide to investigate the reports and provide protective services. Although complete data are not available, it is clear that the resources of CPS agencies have not increased 188 percent since 1976.

The rate of reporting has shown an even larger increase from 10.1 children in 1976, to 30.6 children reported in 1985 for every 1,000 children.

There continues to be a significant variation in reporting rates from state to state that probably speaks more to large discrepancies in levels of resources, public awareness, and policy and practice variations rather than to differences in actual numbers of abused and neglected children.

The major patterns in the 1985 data can be summarized as follows:

- Professionals are reporting 54 percent of the cases, a rising trend.
- CPS systems are substantiating about 40 to 43 percent of the cases.
- The average age of the involved children is 7 years old; there are slightly more female than male children reported.
- Whites are under-represented in the reporting data.
- The average age of perpetrators is 31.5 years, consistent over time.
- 44 percent of the children reported are under six years old.
- 41 percent of the children associated with substantiated cases are under six.
- Female children are slightly more likely to be substantiated than males.
- There has been a 13 percent increase in sexual abuse reports between 1984 and 1985, and it appears that the rate of increase in reported sexual maltreatment is decreasing.
- Sexually maltreated children are two years older on average than are all reported children.
- Sexually maltreated children tend to be reported by professionals 60 percent of the time compared to 54 percent for all reported children.

The issue of substantiation is a source of major concern for CPS agencies and increasingly, the general public. In 1985, 40 to 43 percent of all reports were substantiated. In 1984, 42 percent of the children reported were substantiated. Even at the relatively constant percentage of substantiation, CPS agencies were substantiating more actual cases in 1985 than 1984 and clearly are conducting more investigations as reflected by the 12 percent increase in reporting.

Contact with the field continues to suggest the presence and acceleration of procedures for prioritizing and screening reports. For example, in 1984 only one state, Illinois, had included a sophisticated approach for assessing risk at intake in the state's policy manual. By comparison, in 1986 some ten states had included similar systems in their policy manuals. In the presence of the constantly increasing number of reports identified to CPS, this trend suggests that screening and substantiation procedures are being tightened to force a balance between system capacity and the need for protective services.

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Appendices

A. Data Items and Response Categories for the National Study Data Base

B. Case Data Participants

C. Information Source and Distributional Characteristics of National Reporting Statistics

Appendix A

Data Items and Response Categories
for the
National Study Data Base

Appendix A
Data Items and Response Categories
For the National Study Data Base

Case and Family Descriptors —

A. Date of Initial Report

1. Date

B. Date Case Status Determined

1. Date

C. Location

1. State or statecode
2. County or countycode
3. District code

D. Number of Children in Home

1. Number

E. Source of Initial Report

1. Medical personnel
   a. Private physician
   b. Clinic or hospital physician
   c. Other medical personnel
   d. Unspecified/mixed medical personnel
2. School personnel
   a. School nurse
   b. Teacher
   c. Principal
   d. Other school personnel
3. Social service personnel
   a. Social worker
   b. Mental health personnel
   c. Institutional staff
   d. Other social service personnel
   e. Unspecified/mixed social service personnel
4. Law enforcement personnel
   a. Police
   b. Courts, attorneys
   c. Parole, probation officer
   d. Emergency service personnel
   e. Other law enforcement personnel
5. Nonprofessionals
   a. Friend, neighbor
   b. Victim
   c. Responsible caretaker
   d. Perpetrator/self report
   e. Other family member/relative
   f. Other nonprofessional
   g. Unspecified/mixed nonprofessionals
6. Child care providers
   a. Daycare center
   b. Preschool/nursery school
   c. Daycare home
   d. Babysitter
   e. Other child care providers
   f. Unspecified/mixed child care providers
7. Other source of report
   a. Anonymous
   b. Other
   c. Unspecified/mixed source of report
8. Unknown

F. Case Status

1. Currently under investigation
2. Case closed after investigation
3. Protective services provided
4. Other case status
   a. Case referred for services other than protective
   b. Cannot locate family
   c. Other
   d. Unspecified/mixed case status
5. Unknown

G. Services Provided or Arranged
(maximum of four responses are allowed per report)

1. Investigation only — services expected/planned
2. Casework counseling
3. Court action initiated
4. Immediate or short-term crisis services
   a. Emergency shelter
   b. Immediate medical services
   c. Unspecified/mixed short-term crisis services
5. Long-term or support services
   a. Foster care or out-of-home placement
   b. Ongoing health services
   c. Day care
   d. Homemaker services
   e. Budgeting/home management services
   f. Mental health services/counseling
   g. Employment services
   h. Housing assistance

i. Parents Anonymous or community self-help groups
j. Legal services
k. Parenting education
l. Church/neighborhood assistance
m. Financial/public assistance
n. Unspecified/mixed long-term support services

6. Other services
   a. Other
   b. Unspecified/mixed services provided or arranged
7. Family refused services
8. None
9. Unknown

H. Type of Report

1. Abuse
   a. Abuse unsubstantiated
   b. Abuse substantiated
   c. Abuse — substantiation unspecified
2. Neglect
   a. Neglect unsubstantiated
   b. Neglect substantiated
   c. Neglect — substantiation unspecified
3. Abuse and neglect
   a. Abuse/neglect unsubstantiated
   b. Abuse/neglect substantiated
   c. Abuse/neglect — substantiation unspecified
4. Report type unspecified
   a. Unsubstantiated, report type unspecified
   b. Substantiated, report type unspecified
   c. Nonspecified substantiation and report type
5. Other report type
   a. At risk
   b. Other
6. Unknown

I. Family Public Assistance Status
(a maximum of three responses are allowed)

1. Receiving public assistance
   a. Receiving AFDC
   b. Receiving SSI
   c. Receiving food stamps
   d. Receiving Medicaid, Medicare
   e. Receiving WIN
   f. Receiving other public assistance
   g. Receiving unspecified/mixed public assistance
2. Not receiving public assistance
3. Unknown

J. Family Stress Factors
(a maximum of six responses are allowed for each case)

1. Health problems
   a. Alcohol/drug dependency
   b. Medical/physical disability of caretaker
   c. Medical/physical disability of child
   d. Mental retardation of caretaker
   e. Mental retardation of child
   f. Mental/emotional health problem of caretaker
   g. Mental/emotional health problem of child
   h. Other health problems
   i. Unspecified/mixed health problems
2. Economic or physical living conditions
   a. Inadequate housing
   b. Social isolation
   c. Job-related problems
   d. Insufficient income
   e. Transient or unstable living situation
   f. Mismanagement of income
   g. Other economic or physical living condition problems
   h. Unspecified/mixed economic or physical conditions
3. Family interaction problems
   a. Spouse abuse
   b. Chronic family violence
   c. Inability to cope with parenting responsibility
   d. Marital problems/instability
   e. New baby/pregnancy
   f. Disruption of family structure due to death/absence of family member
   g. Other family interaction problems
   h. Unspecified/mixed family interaction problems
4. Other stress factors
   a. Other
   b. Unspecified/mixed stress factors
5. None
6. Unknown

Responsible Caretaker and Perpetrator Descriptors

A. Responsible Caretaker Age

1. Age in years

B. Responsible Caretaker Sex

1. Male
2. Female
3. Unknown

C. Responsible Caretaker Race

1. White
2. Black

3. Hispanic
4. Other race
    a. Asian
    b. Native American
    c. Alaskan Native
    d. Other
    e. Unspecified/mixed other race
5. Unknown

D. Responsible Caretaker Employment Status

1. Employed full time
2. Unemployed
3. Other employment status
    a. Employed less than full time
    b. Temporary employment
    c. Student, not in labor force
    d. Homemaker, not in labor force
    e. Disabled, not in labor force
    f. Unspecified/mixed other employment status
4. Unknown

E. Perpetrator Age

1. Age in years

F. Perpetrator Sex

1. Male
2. Female
3. Unknown

G. Perpetrator Race

1. White
2. Black
3. Hispanic
4. Other
    a. Asian
    b. Native American
    c. Other
    d. Unspecified/mixed other race
5. Unknown

Child Data

A. Child Age

1. Age in years

B. Child Sex

1. Male
2. Female
3. Unknown

C. Child Race

1. White
2. Black
3. Hispanic
4. Other Race
    a. Asian
    b. Native American
    c. Alaskan Native
    d. Other
    e. Unspecified/mixed other race
5. Unknown

D. Child Relationship to Responsible Caretaker

1. Parental
    a. Natural
    b. Step
    c. Adoptive
    d. Foster
    e. Unspecified/mixed parental relationship
2. Other relative
    a. Sibling
    b. Grandchild
    c. Other relative
    d. Unspecified/mixed other relative
3. Other relationship
    a. Boyfriend/girlfriend of parent
    b. State institution
    c. Private institution
    d. Other
    e. Unspecified/mixed other caretaker relationship
4. Unknown

E. Child Relationship to Perpetrator

1. Parental
    a. Natural
    b. Step
    c. Adoptive
    d. Foster
    e. Unspecified/mixed parental relationship
2. Other relative
    a. Sibling
    b. Grandchild
    c. Other relative
    d. Unspecified/mixed other relative
3. Other relationship
    a. Boyfriend/girlfriend of parent
    b. State institutional staff
    c. Private institutional staff
    d. Babysitter
    e. Teacher
    f. Neighbor/friend of parent
    g. No relationship
    h. Other
    i. Unspecified/mixed other perpetrator
4. Unknown

F. Type of Maltreatment
(maximum of five responses are allowed for each child)

1. Major
   a. Brain damage/skull fracture
   b. Subdural hemorrhage or hematoma
   c. Bone fracture
   d. Dislocation/sprains
   e. Internal injuries
   f. Poisoning
   g. Burns/scalds
   h. Severe cuts/lacerations/bruises
   i. Other major physical injury
   j. Unspecified/mixed major physical injuries
2. Minor physical injury
   a. Minor cuts/bruises/welts
   b. Twisting/shaking
   c. Other minor injury
   d. Unspecified/mixed minor physical injuries
3. Physical injury, severity unspecified
   a. Unspecified/mixed physical injury
4. Sexual maltreatment
   a. Incest
   b. Exploitation
   c. Rape/intercourse
   d. Molestation
   e. Other sexual maltreatment
   f. Unspecified/mixed sexual maltreatment
5. Deprivation of necessities
   a. Neglecting to provide nourishment
   b. Neglecting to provide shelter
   c. Neglecting to provide clothing
   d. Neglecting to provide health care
   e. Failure to thrive
   f. Lack of supervision
   g. Educational neglect
   h. Unspecified/mixed deprivation of necessities
6. Emotional maltreatment
   a. Emotional abuse
   b. Emotional neglect
   c. Unspecified/mixed emotional maltreatment
7. Other maltreatment
   a. Abandonment
   b. Other
   c. Unspecified/mixed maltreatment
8. No maltreatment
9. Noninvolved child
10. Unknown

G. Fatality

1. Fatal
2. Nonfatal
3. Unknown

Appendix B

Case Data Participants

Report Totals of Included Case Data Participants

	Total
Florida	118,651[1]
Illinois	40,631
New York	64,840
Texas	67,344
Utah	10,727
Total	**302,193[2]**

[1] Represents individual child reports as opposed to family reports.
[2] The states contributing to this total contain 25 percent of the U.S. child population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986, P-25, 998)

States Submitting Case Data Files

Alaska
Arkansas
Arizona
California
Colorado
District of Columbia
Hawaii
Iowa
Kentucky
Maine
Massachusetts
Mississippi
Missouri
Nebraska
Nevada
New York
North Carolina
Ohio
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
Tennessee
Vermont
Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

Appendix C

Information Source and Distributional Characteristics of National Reporting Statistics

Table C1
Source of Information for Family Reports (Investigations)

Source of State Totals	Source Codes	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Estimate by state	1	3	5.5	5.5
State computer system	2	23	41.8	47.3
State hand count	3	8	14.5	61.8
State jurisdiction count	4	3	5.5	65.5
National family/child ratio	6	12	21.8	89.1
State family/child ratio	7	2	3.6	92.7
Last year's figures	8	4	7.3	100.0
	TOTAL	**55**	**100.0**	

Source of Information for Child Reports (Investigations)

Source of State Totals	Source Codes	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Estimate by state	1	5	9.1	9.1
State computer system	2	22	40.0	49.1
State hand count	3	5	9.1	58.2
State jurisdiction count	4	2	3.6	61.8
National family/child ratio	6	12	21.8	83.6
State family/child ratio	7	4	7.3	90.9
Last year's figures	8	4	7.3	98.2
Mixed program source	9	1	1.8	100.0
	TOTAL	**55**	**100.0**	

Table C2
Distributional Characteristics of Reporting Rates

	All States (n = 51)	States Included in Case Data (n = 5)	States Not Included in Case Data (n = 46)
Average Reporting Rate per 1,000 Children	31.10	31.94	31.01
Standard Deviation	11.61	22.47	11.54
Range	49.95	41.66	49.95